

# VISN 18

## ANNUAL STATEMENT 2004



*Caring for Veterans =*

*Enhancing Service and Satisfaction +*

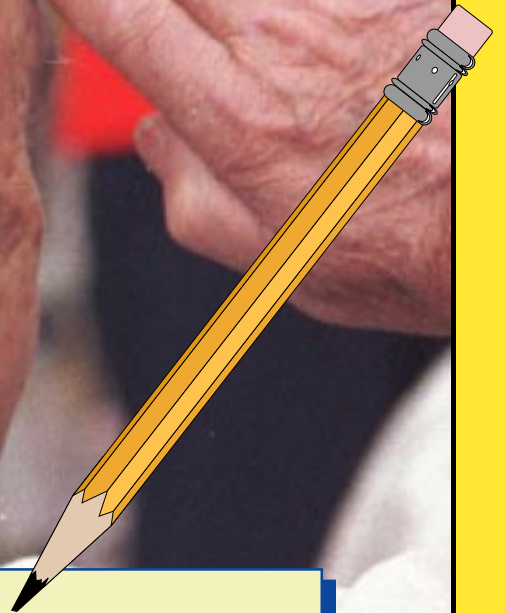


**Southwest**  
Health Care Network  
VISN 18

*Improving Access to Care +*

*Developing Our Employees +*

*Planning for the Future*



# VISN 18 Caring for Veterans



In Veterans Integrated Service Network 18 (VISN 18) our mission is clear — caring for veterans. We accomplish our mission through a formula for success that we have developed and embraced.

As you read through this year's Annual Statement, you will find many examples of how we have worked to translate this formula from words into actions for our veterans. Perhaps our

greatest challenge is assuring that we have enough space and sufficient workforce to meet the needs of the increasing number of patients who seek care with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The number of patients we provide care for in VISN 18 has grown from 177,000 in 1999 to 232,000 in 2003, an increase of 55,000 veterans in four years. We climbed to a record 2,149,000 outpatient visits across the health care network, a 34% increase in visits since 1999. Through our strategic planning process and more recently, the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process, we continually analyze our service gaps, develop plans, and implement actions to keep pace with this growth. On Pages 4 and 5 you will see several exciting examples of how those plans became reality in 2003, and plans for future improvements as well.



VA continues to be a leader nationally in our preventive approach to disease, screening for early detection and treatment of cancers and hepatitis, and giving flu and pneumonia vaccines. Our VISN 18 overall prevention index score is 82%, up from 76% two years ago. In response to a finding that many patients experiencing heart attack symptoms were bypassing community hospitals and driving greater distances in order to reach their local VA hospital, VA is now launching a "Time is Life for Heart Attack" campaign. VISN 18 has a team of physicians and other professionals working to implement a plan to educate patients on heart attack signs and symptoms and improve referrals and access, because early intervention provides the best likelihood of recovery.

VA has been proud to stand ready as a national resource for service members returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and other conflicts. Within our own VISN 18 workforce, 702 of our employees are members of the Reserves or National Guard and 90 of those were called up to serve our country in their military units during 2003. Individuals have been designated at each hospital to assist injured or ill service members with transition from Department of Defense to VA services. While we give compassionate care to these newest of veterans, we are also ever mindful that 38% of our patients are more than 65 years of age, with their own special health care needs. So that elderly veterans and those living in rural areas may not have to travel to medical centers and clinics as frequently to receive care, VISN 18 is increasing our resources invested in home care services and technologies that allow us to provide care remotely.

It is my privilege to lead the 7,400 employees of VISN 18 in caring for America's veterans. Our commitment to continually seek ways to improve the quality of that care remains strong. Thank you for your support in accomplishing our mission during 2003.



Patricia A. McKlem  
Network Director

# Enhancing Service and Satisfaction

## Safety First for Patients and Staff

VISN 18 is linking patient safety and environmental safety programs. We recognize that many aspects of these two areas overlap and pooling knowledge and resources can achieve better outcomes. Safety rounds often include a mix of nurses, engineers, industrial hygienists, and environmental managers. We recently began using the Walsh handheld computer (pictured below) for environmental rounds to record problem areas. The Walsh system sends information to a database and creates a report that allows supervisors to provide immediate feedback on cleanliness or unsafe situations. Through the constant evaluation of safety issues we provide our veterans optimal health care and our employees a safe work environment.

## Health Technology

Health Informatics, a Web-based resource, is available to increase patient knowledge and give standardized health information. Accessible in a veteran's home, this

Internet site contains over 5,000 articles on health issues, medical conditions, and medications, in an easy-to-understand format. Staff can print information from this site for patients during a medical visit, as well. Nationally, VA has also recently launched My HealtheVet, another Web-based health information resource. My HealtheVet can be viewed at: [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov) Health Informatics can be viewed at: [www.va.gov/VISN18/Health\\_Informatics.htm](http://www.va.gov/VISN18/Health_Informatics.htm)

## Research

VISN 18 employees are engaged in many productive research activities that enhance the quality of life for veterans. For example, a Cooperative Study Research Grant in diabetes will be examining control of blood sugar and long-term complications of type-2 diabetes, such as heart disease, stroke and amputations. This is a seven-year, \$65 million nationwide study. Another notable achievement is the addition of a Molecular Diagnostics

and Research Laboratory (MDRL) at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, focusing on detection of diseases at the genetic level using DNA and RNA as the targets. To further promote research, the Network has made \$300,000 available in grants to recognize new investigators and encourage them to pursue research interests that benefit veterans.

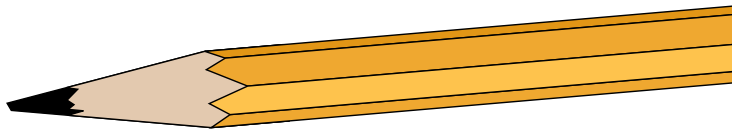
## Prescription Video

To improve prescription refill services, we produced a six-minute instructional video specifically for veteran patients. This video provides simple, step-by-step instructions on how to use the automated telephone system to order and receive prescription refills, and reduce unnecessary trips to a VA facility. By using this alternative, veterans can help decrease pharmacy window waiting times at their local medical center for those patients who require new prescriptions for their urgent care needs. The video airs in waiting rooms at hospitals and clinics.





# Improving Access to Care



## New Clinical Space

In Tucson, Arizona, an 83,000 square foot Ambulatory Care Addition has been completed and is home to four primary care teams, the Women's Health Clinic, the Eye Clinic and Medical Specialty Care. The new building provides 77 primary care exam rooms plus treatment rooms, state of the art radiology technology, and allows space for a greatly expanded Eye Clinic. Patients with a VA prescription can order eyeglasses in the new optical shop.

A newly constructed Community Based Outpatient Clinic opened in Lubbock, Texas, replacing an aging clinic. This 46,000 square foot clinic provides additional primary care exam rooms for more efficient patient flow and care delivery, and state of the art radiology and dental technology. Configuration of the new building allows for provision of Physical Therapy services, improving access for over 620 patients who previously had to travel 120 miles

to Amarillo for treatment.

In rural Payson, Arizona, a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic was opened. The clinic provides primary care services including lab, x-ray and first-fill pharmacy support.

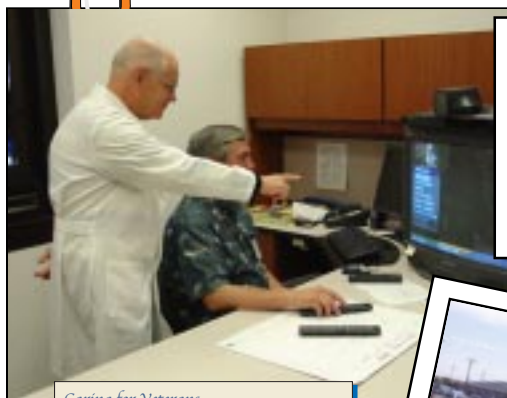
## Reduced Waiting Times

Much emphasis has been placed on reducing the number of veterans Service Connected 50% or more who are waiting more than 30 days to be seen in Primary Care and the five Specialty Clinics of Audiology, Eye Care, Cardiology, Orthopedics and Urology. In September 2002 there were 3,476 veterans across the Network waiting more than 30 days to be seen. By September 2003 this number had been reduced to 216 veterans waiting, a 94% reduction and a substantial improvement in access to care. Similarly, the wait time for a "next available" appointment in Primary Care was 45 days in Fiscal Year 2002, and in Fiscal Year 2003 this waiting time was reduced to 25 days, a 44% improve-

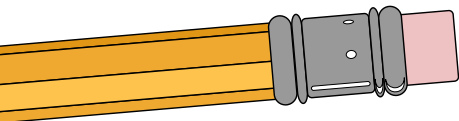
ment in one year. In the Specialty Care Clinics, the average waiting time improved from 42 days to 36 days. While we are extremely pleased with these results, we are not satisfied, and our efforts to improve access will continue in 2004.

## Telehealth

We are implementing telehealth to improve medical services to patients in rural parts of the Network. Telehealth is remote patient case management using devices located in the patient's home and connect to hospital staff via a normal phone line. The patient responds to short, disease-specific, questions each day. The devices may also be used to transmit vital signs and medical information to hospital staff monitoring the daily reports. Hospital staff can send patients reminders, tips, and feedback on their progress. Telehealth enhances veteran health care because it allows for earlier intervention and improved veteran self-care and self-assurance. To be-



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gin, selected patients with congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease will receive telehealth care in their homes. Implementation will begin with the Geriatric Clinic and the Spinal Cord Injury Clinic in Tucson, and later will be made available to the Primary and Medical Care teams there. In the next phase, patients from Amarillo will be connected.

### **Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES)**

Nationally, VA conducted an analysis and projection of veteran population and health care needs through 2022. From that, VA identified “planning initiatives” for each VISN in response to gaps and/or redundancies between current supply and future demand, based on factors such as workload, location, access, space, and health care needs. Based on input from the VISN 18 CARES Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the seven VISN health care systems, we then developed our CARES

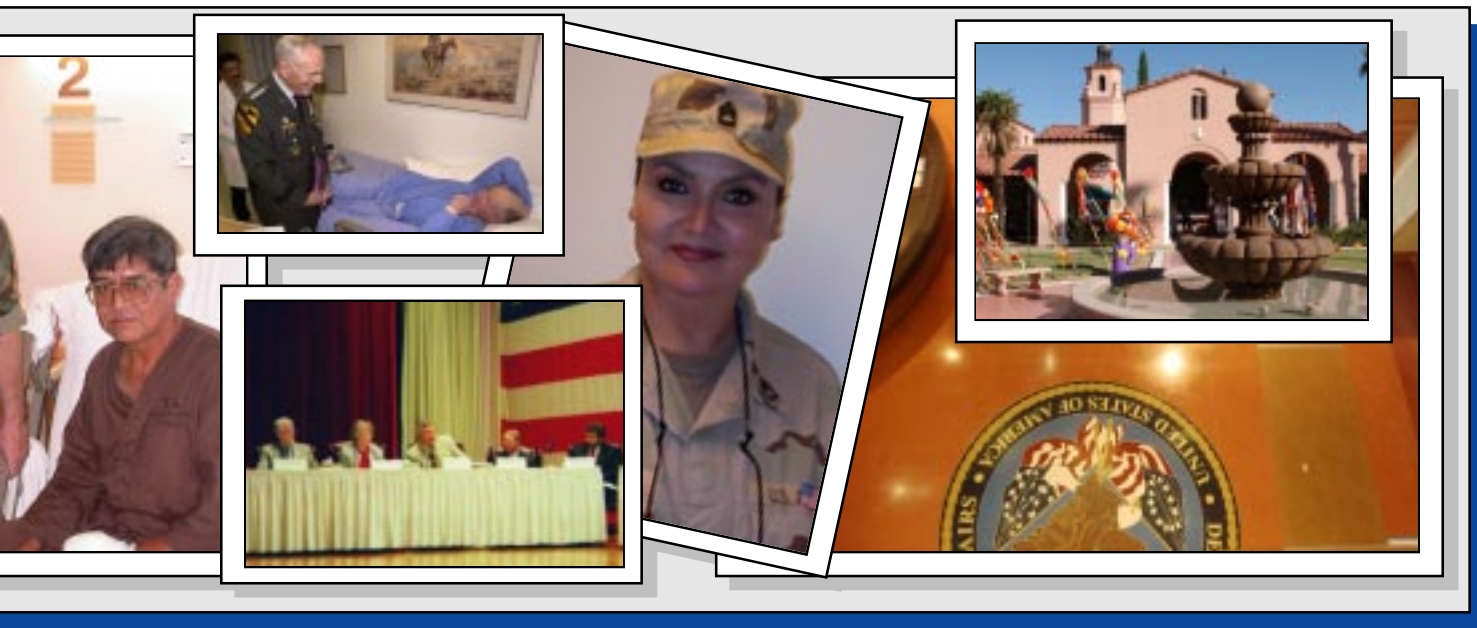
Market Plan and submitted it to VA Central Office in April 2003. The Market Plan addressed all of the planning initiatives identified by VA Central Office for both the Arizona Market and the New Mexico/West Texas Market. Our planning initiative solutions were well received by VA Central Office reviewers and the CARES Commission. Highlights of the CARES planning initiative solutions for the Arizona Market are:

- Expand both inpatient and outpatient medical services at the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System
- Expand outpatient specialty care services at all of the Arizona facilities
- Expand outpatient mental health services at all of the Arizona facilities
- Expand inpatient psychiatry beds at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center and the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System

Highlights of the CARES planning initiative solutions for the New Mexico/West Texas Market are:

- Establish inpatient medical beds and inpatient psychiatry beds in conjunction with the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso
- Expand outpatient specialty care at all of the New Mexico/West Texas facilities
- Expand outpatient mental health services at all of the New Mexico/West Texas facilities

The CARES Commission held public hearings in September 2003 in El Paso, Texas, and Prescott, Arizona, to review our plans and solicit public comment. The Commission is now deliberating and is expected to release a final report with their recommendations to the Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs in mid February 2004.



# Developing Our Employees

Employment levels in VISN 18 have increased by over 700 individuals (11%) over the last 5 years and we now stand over 7400 employees strong. However like most VISNs, our work force continues to get older and today averages 48 years of age. In fact, there were more than 1100 retirements last year. With more anticipated retirements on the horizon and losses due to other employment opportunities, it is likely that we will lose nearly 1600 employees annually over the next few years. VISN 18 has therefore placed a high priority on employee development and, in particular, leadership training to ensure that we maintain a highly qualified staff to provide health care to the veterans we proudly serve.

One attempt to fulfill this commitment is through our Leadership Development Institute (LDI). VISN 18's

LDI provides training opportunities and experiences that support VA goals. We are proud to report that there have been 88 graduates to date. The recent "2003 LDI Class" (pictured below at left) not only included employees from each of our health care facilities, but also included individuals from Veterans Benefits and National Cemetery Administrations. Each year LDI classes are required to complete a group project. One example this past year was the development of an interactive power point presentation housed on the VISN's website that promotes the "One VA Concept." This presentation educates and provides employees with readily available information about VA benefits and health care. Another project highlighted public education. This project produced a public service announcement that highlights veteran benefits

and explains how services can be obtained. Both of these projects are examples of our motivation and commitment to get timely and accurate information to veterans and their dependents.

Other leadership training that is part of VISN 18's Succession Plan targets specific disciplines and occupations. Seven "Internship Programs" have been initiated in the areas of Associate Medical Center Director, Finance, Health Information, Human Resources, Acquisition, Computer Programmer, and Nursing Administration.

These programs, along with other employee development opportunities, are vital for our future work force. VISN 18 is extremely proud of every LDI graduate and intern and we recognize that their continual learning along with others in our organization is essential to the success of our VISN.



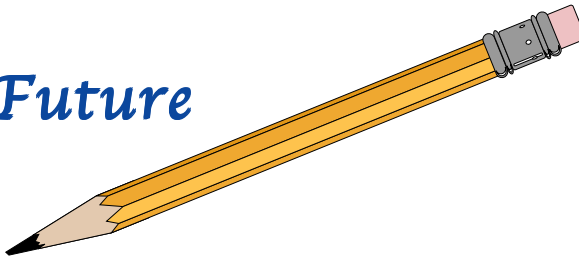
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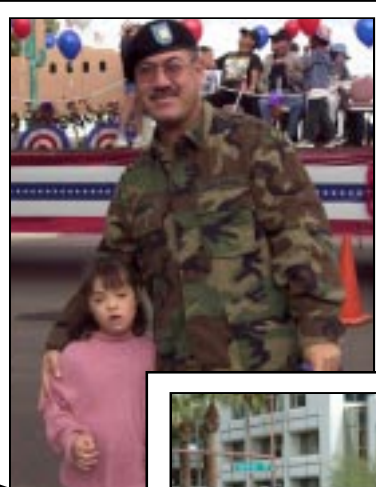


# Planning for the Future

*VISN 18 is committed to:*



- Improving access, convenience, and timeliness of VA health care services
- Providing care in the least restrictive and most efficient setting
- Improving and enhancing home care services and developing an assisted living strategy
- Using preventive medicine practices and guidelines for chronic disease management
- Accelerating development of our telehealth initiative
- Improving Veterans Customer Service
- Expanding VA sharing and collaboration with Indian Health Service and the Department of Defense
- Pioneering research that addresses veteran-related health issues
- Partnering with other Federal, state, and community agencies to develop a national emergency preparedness plan that clearly articulates VA's role and capabilities to respond to emergencies
- Continuing to recruit and retain a comprehensive and cohesive workforce
- Increasing revenues to support veterans' health care



## Arizona

### **Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center**

650 E. Indian School Rd  
Phoenix, AZ 85012-1892  
(602) 277-5551

### **Mesa CBOC**

6950 E. Williams Field Rd  
Mesa, AZ 85212-6033  
(602) 222-6568/3315

### **Show Low CBOC**

2450 E. Show Low Lake Rd, Suite 1  
Show Low, AZ 85901-7953  
(928) 532-1069

### **Buckeye CBOC**

1209 North Miller Road  
Buckeye, AZ 85326  
(623) 386-5785

### **Sun City CBOC**

10147 Grand Ave, Suite C1  
Sun City, AZ 85351-3435  
(602) 222-2630

### **Payson CBOC**

1106 N. Beeline Highway  
Payson, Arizona 85541  
(928) 472-3148

### **Northern Arizona VA Health Care System**

500 Highway 89 North  
Prescott, AZ 86313  
(928) 445-4860

### **Bellemont CBOC**

Camp Navajo Army Depot  
P.O. Box 16196  
Bellemont, AZ 86015-6196  
(928) 226-1056

### **Cottonwood CBOC**

203 Candy Lane, Suite 5B  
Cottonwood, AZ 86326  
(928) 649-1532

### **Kingman CBOC**

1726 Beverly Ave  
Kingman, AZ 86401  
(928) 692-0080

### **Lake Havasu City CBOC**

2035 Mesquite, Suite E  
Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403  
(928) 680-0090

### **Southern Arizona VA Health Care System**

3601 S. 6th Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85723  
(520) 792-1450

### **Casa Grande CBOC**

900 E. Florence Blvd  
Plaza Del Sol Suites H & I  
Casa Grande, AZ 85222  
1-800-470-8262

### **Safford CBOC**

Bureau of Land Management  
711 S. 14th Ave  
Safford, AZ 85546  
1-800-470-8262

### **Sierra Vista CBOC**

Raymond W. Bliss Army Community  
Health Center  
Building 45006  
Fort Huachuca, AZ 85613  
1-800-470-8262

### **Yuma CBOC**

2555 E. Gila Ridge Rd  
Building 1220  
Yuma, AZ 85365-2240  
1-800-470-8262

### **Green Valley CBOC**

380 W. Hermosa Drive, #140  
Green Valley, AZ 85614  
1-800-470-8262

## New Mexico

### **New Mexico VA Health Care System**

1501 San Pedro Dr, SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87108  
(505) 265-1711

### **Alamogordo CBOC**

1410 Aspen  
Alamogordo, NM 88310  
(505) 437-7000

### **Artesia CBOC**

1700 W. Main St  
Artesia, NM 88210  
(505) 746-3531/3532

### **Durango CBOC**

400 S. Camino Del Rio  
Durango, Colorado 81301  
(970) 247-2214

### **Espanola CBOC**

620 Coronado St, Suite B  
Espanola, NM 87532  
(505) 753-7395

### **Farmington CBOC**

1001 W. Broadway, Suite C  
Farmington, NM 87401  
(505) 326-4383/4384

### **Gallup CBOC**

320 Hwy. 564  
Gallup, NM 87301  
(505) 722-7234/7235

### **Las Vegas CBOC**

Hot Springs Blvd  
P.O. Box 1928  
Las Vegas, NM 87701  
(505) 425-6788

### **Raton CBOC**

1275 South 2d St  
Raton, NM 87740  
(505) 445-2391/2392

### **Santa Fe CBOC**

2213 Brothers Road, Suite 600  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
(505) 986-8645

### **Silver City CBOC**

1302 32d St  
Silver City, NM 88061  
(505) 538-2921

### **Truth or Consequences CBOC**

1960 N. Date S.E.  
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901  
(505) 894-7662

## Texas

### **Amarillo VA Health Care System**

6010 Amarillo Blvd West  
Amarillo, TX 79106  
(806) 355-9703

### **Childress CBOC**

P.O. Box 1030  
Highway 83 North  
Childress, TX 79201  
(940) 937-3636

### **Clovis CBOC**

100 E. Manana, Suite #1  
Clovis, NM 88101  
(505) 763-4335

### **Liberal CBOC**

2 Rock Island Road, Suite 200  
Liberal, KS 67901  
(620) 626-5574

### **Lubbock CBOC**

6104 Avenue Q South Drive  
Lubbock, TX 79412  
(806) 472-3400

### **Stratford CBOC**

1220 Purnell  
P.O. Box 1107  
Stratford, TX 79084  
(806) 396-2852

### **El Paso VA Health Care System**

5001 N. Piedras Street  
El Paso, TX 79930  
(915) 564-6100

### **Las Cruces CBOC**

1635 Don Roser  
Las Cruces, NM 88011  
(505) 522-1241

### **West Texas**

### **VA Health Care System**

300 Veterans Blvd  
Big Spring, TX 79720  
(432) 263-7361

### **Abilene CBOC**

4225 Woods Place, Building 1  
Abilene, TX 79606  
(325) 695-3252

### **Fort Stockton CBOC**

P.O. Box 1060  
Fort Stockton, TX 79735  
(432) 336-8365

### **Hobbs CBOC**

1601 N. Turner (4th floor)  
Hobbs, NM 88240  
(505) 391-0354

### **Odessa CBOC**

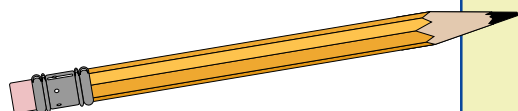
The Professional Tower  
419 W. Fourth St  
Odessa, TX 79761  
(432) 580-4560

### **San Angelo CBOC**

2018 Pulliam  
San Angelo, TX 76905  
(325) 658-6138

### **Stamford CBOC**

1303 Mabree Dr.  
Stamford, TX 79553  
(325) 773-5733



### **VISN 18 Web site**

<http://www.va.gov/visn18/default.htm>

### **Health Informatics Web site**

[http://www.va.gov/visn18/HI/health\\_informatics.htm](http://www.va.gov/visn18/HI/health_informatics.htm)

